



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS | Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corps of Engineers ends Lake Okeechobee releases to Caloosahatchee Estuary

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District will end water releases from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee Estuary tomorrow, March 18.

The Corps strives to maintain the lake between 12.5 and 15.5 feet (NGVD) while balancing all competing demands. The Corps used operational flexibility to implement a series of pulse releases since March 4 to help improve the condition of the Caloosahatchee Estuary. The Corps previously stated the releases would stop once the lake enters the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) water shortage management band. The lake stage today is 11.82 feet (NGVD), and this weekend the Corps anticipates entering the water shortage management band, which varies seasonally between elevation 10.5 feet and 13 feet.

In addition to the lake releases, recent rain in the Caloosahatchee basin provided critical freshwater to the Caloosahatchee Estuary. "Rain, runoff and low volume releases have helped to prolong the benefit of lowered salinities during a crucial spawning period and have aided in reducing additional impacts and degradation of freshwater tape grass and other submerged aquatic vegetation. We hope the combination of both helps stabilize conditions in the estuary until the rainy season begins," said Lt. Col. Michael Kinard, deputy district commander, south Florida.

While in the water shortage management band, operations are governed by the South Florida Water Management District's Lake Okeechobee Water Shortage Management Plan.

The Corps and partner agencies will continue to closely monitor and assess system conditions. For more information on water level and flows data for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project, visit the Corps' water management page at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Engineering/Branches/WaterResources/WaterMgt/index.htm>.

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